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Animal Health Advisory **BOAH Continues Avian Influenza Monitoring**

INDIANAPOLIS (2 November 2005)—Growing concerns about a potential influenza pandemic are raising questions about domestic poultry. This advisory is intended as an update on the current information, as well as ongoing efforts by the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) related to avian influenza, or AI.

When advising clients and others about potential risks, consider the following:

- Some media reports have generated confusion about the specific strain of AI that poses a severe threat. The H5N1 strain that is causing concern in Asia and parts of Europe has not been identified in the United States or North America. To prevent accidental introduction and protect America's industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture restricts importations of birds and poultry products from countries with known infection.

- BOAH, in cooperation with the Indiana State Poultry Association, has an ongoing surveillance program to detect the presence of any strain of AI. Each year, approximately 30,000 birds are tested in Indiana for AI and other diseases that could affect the state's poultry industry. Commercial and exhibition poultry are routinely tested to ensure they meet the highest international health standards.

- Farming practices in the United States are vastly different from what is typical in Asia and other parts of the globe. Americans do not normally live with their livestock and poultry in the same way other cultures do. Commercial U.S. poultry production emphasizes disease prevention through strict biosecurity and regular testing.

- All strains of avian influenza are reportable to BOAH under state law; however, not all strains pose a threat to public or animal health. Highly pathogenic strains (including H5N1) are considered foreign animal disease that would trigger emergency response efforts. As part of BOAH's field investigations for a variety of poultry health problems, AI surveillance is standard. A confirmed diagnosis would launch the Indiana State Poultry Association Poultry Health and Response Plan, a joint readiness plan between BOAH and industry first developed in 1985.

- With proper handling and cooking, as recommended for all meat and poultry products, AI does not pose a threat to food safety.

Birds affected with HPAI may show one or more of the following signs: Sudden death without clinical signs; lack of energy and appetite; decreased egg production; soft-shelled or misshapen eggs; swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks; purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs; nasal discharge; coughing, sneezing; incoordination; or diarrhea.

Hoosier bird owners and veterinarians who suspect a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza should contact the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Purdue University (phone: 765-494-7440) to submit dead birds for testing. A veterinary referral is not required for poultry and exotic pet bird species. Backyard flocks represent an important surveillance group to ensure this disease has not spread to the state of Indiana.

More information about AI and other avian diseases is available on the BOAH website at: www.boah.in.gov, click on the Avian link.